Pope Leo 'May Never' Visit U.S. While Trump Is President, Vatican Official Says After Canceling His 2026 Trip: Report

Vatican and U.S. officials told 'The Free Press' that the pontiff's January address to the diplomatic corps was seen as a direct attack on Trump's policies

By **Ingrid Vasquez** | Published on April 9, 2026 01:13PM EDT

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(L-R) Pope Leo XIV, President Donald Trump.
Credit : Tiziana FABI / AFP via Getty; Anna Moneymaker/Getty

NEED TO KNOW

Pope Leo XIV criticized U.S. foreign policy in a speech, calling for diplomacy based on dialogue over force

A Vatican official reportedly claimed the pope may never visit the U.S. while Donald Trump is president, according to *The Free Press*

The pope reportedly declined an invitation to the White House and will visit Lampedusa, an Italian island in the Mediterranean, on July 4 instead

Pope Leo XIV, who is the first American pope in history, "may never" return to the U.S. while President Donald Trump is in office, according to a recent report.

The pope gave his annual address to members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See in January, in which he talked about the

"importance of international humanitarian law."

According to a recent report from *The Free Press*, following the address, the Department of Defense invited Cardinal Christophe Pierre, who was serving as the pope's personal representative to the U.S. at the time, for a meeting at the Pentagon.

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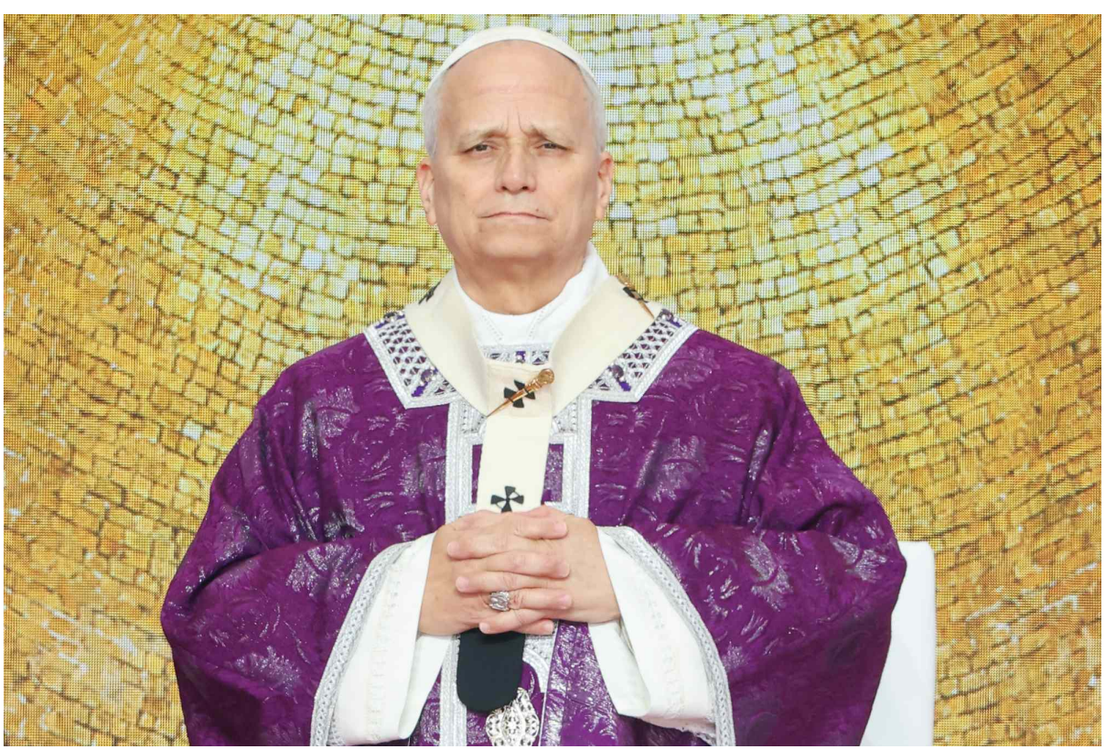
Vatican officials who were briefed on the Pentagon meeting described it as a "bitter lecture warning that the United States has the military power to do whatever it wants — and that the Church had better take its side," reports *The Free Press*. The officials spoke to the outlet on the condition of anonymity.



Pope Leo XIV leads a Holy Mass on March 28, 2026 in Monaco.

Credit: Stephane Cardinale/PLS Monaco Pool/Getty

A Vatican official reportedly told the outlet that, following the January meeting, "The pope may well never visit the United States under this administration."

According to *The Free Press*, Vice President JD Vance previously invited the pope to celebrate the U.S.'s 250th birthday at the White House on July 4, an offer the pope reportedly refused.

Instead, Pope Leo will travel to Lampedusa, an Italian island in the Mediterranean that has become a gateway for North African migrants seeking to enter Europe, on July 4, *The Free Press* reports.

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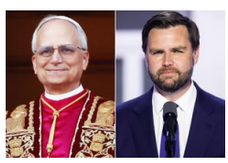
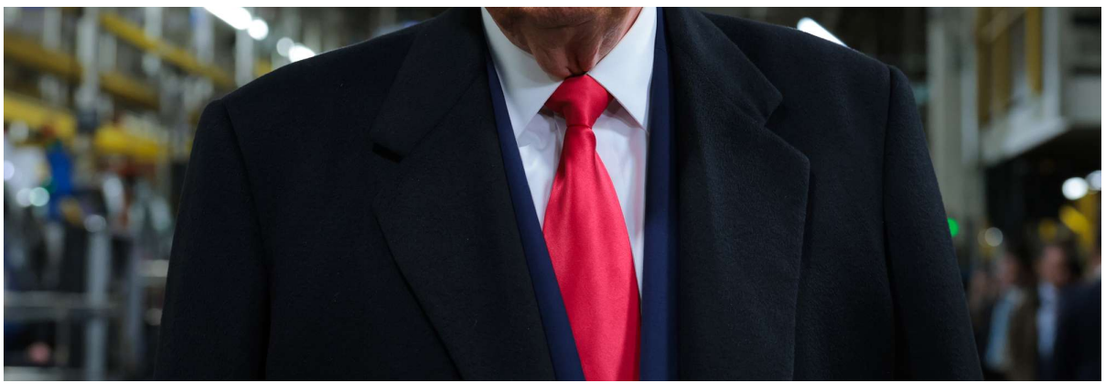


President Trump Reacts to Catholic Church Picking the First American Pope in History

Both Vatican and U.S. officials told *The Free Press* that the pontiff's January address was seen as a direct attack on Trump's policies.

One Vatican official told *The Free Press* that there was also an issue with the section of the speech in which Pope Leo appeared to challenge the Donroe Doctrine, Trump's update of the Monroe Doctrine that calls for U.S. control of the Western Hemisphere.

"A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies," the pope said in his speech.



President Donald Trump tours the Ford River Rouge Complex on January 13, 2026 in Dearborn, Michigan.
Credit: Anna Moneymaker/Getty

When Vance was asked about the Pentagon meeting by reporters on April 8, he initially said that he didn't know who Pierre was. After he was reminded who the cardinal was, Vance declined to comment.

A spokesperson for the Pentagon told PEOPLE in a statement that the meeting with Pierre was "respectful and reasonable."

"*The Free Press*'s characterization of the meeting is highly exaggerated and distorted," the spokesperson told the outlet. "The meeting between Pentagon and Vatican officials was a respectful and reasonable discussion. We have nothing but the highest regard and welcome continued dialogue with the Holy See."